



SOUTH LAFOURCHE LEVEE DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND THE SOUTH LAFOURCHE LEVEE DISTRICT APPROACH

Since 1980, the Board of Commissioners (Board) of the South Lafourche Levee District has supported coastal protection for the wetlands and dry lands. The Board believes that environmental laws were created to foster an environment for the benefit of the people who live in that environment. Environmental laws were not designed to hurt people in their pursuit of happiness or prosperity.

The Board has worked within the framework of the federally approved Coastal Zone Management (CZM) plan as described by and created by federal laws. In that plan, the Board worked to encourage development inside the Larose to Golden Meadow Hurricane Protection System, and has supported environmental enhancement outside the system for the betterment of the people and tax payers of South Lafourche. Approximately 35,000 acres are enclosed by the hurricane protection system, and some 420,000 acres of wetland habitat exists outside that same system within our district. In short, the Board has attempted to keep the dry land dry and the wetland wet.

To accomplish this goal the Board, as a local sponsor to a US Army Corps of Engineers Hurricane Protection Project, has partnered in constructing a 48 mile ring flood protection system. Part of that same goal has led the district to participate with local, state, and private partners in trying to maintain marsh, barrier islands and cheniers within the district. This wetland environment and its productivity was the basis of the founding of these communities. The wetland environment remains an important part of these communities.

The Board has continued to take actions to assist in the maintenance of our wetland environment. In 1985 while only a small portion of the levee system was constructed, the Board took the lead and urged the Corps to design and construct the mitigation project which would mitigate for the footprint of the levee and all of the land, wetland and waterbottom that it enclosed. It is important to note that at that time there was nothing that forced concurrent mitigation with construction of the project. Although building the mitigation project delayed some of the levee work, the hope was to be able to build future levees without the possibility of delay due to environmental concerns. It also allowed the levee district to build wetland projects without having to wait for the tedious process of getting environmental credit for those wetland projects as part of mitigation. In effect, it allowed the district to be aggressive in building both flood protection and environmental projects.

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Aside from the formal involvement of the South Lafourche Levee District in restoration, the levee district has supported and encouraged the general manager to work on environmental issues. That has resulted in the manager being a member of the Lafourche Parish CZM for over 13 years, chairman of the Barataria Terrebonne Estuary Program for seven years, the Lafourche Parish CZM administrator for four years, the CIAP Coordinator for the parish, a charter member of the State's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, and on the Governor's Coastal Restoration and Conservation Advisory Commission for four years. The district has also partnered with several institutions in experimenting with techniques, processes and equipment for environmental enhancement. The district has developed the concept of a marsh apron approach to protect the toe of the levee from erosion rather than the use of hard structures like rocks.

The district has also fostered the comprehensive hurricane protection approach which involves planning for the construction of flood protection, environmental restoration, navigation, and evacuation projects together for the needs of the community.

Only two months ago the Board voted to use \$1M for environmental restoration. This is how the South Lafourche Levee District works and its approach to environmental issues.

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